



## Public Health Week in Hawaii

April 4-10, 2005

Public health advancements and new treatment options enable us to live longer. The average life expectancy in the United States is now 74 years for men and 78 years for women. In Hawaii it is 77 for men and 83 for women. It is not only important to live longer but to be stronger and healthier.

Many individuals, families, communities, and policy makers miss prevention opportunities that increase our chances of aging stronger and healthier. As we grow older we endure chronic physical and mental illnesses that could be avoided or diminished if addressed. It is never too late. National Public Health Week 2005 focuses on empowering people to live stronger, longer! The Department and the Hawaii Public Health Association will promote **three Ps** in adding healthy years to life: Prevent, Protect and Plan.

Taking preventive action and adopting a healthier lifestyle is critical.

Research shows that many of the deterioration symptoms that come with age are a matter of influence and mindset, not genetics. Many of us often miss simple opportunities to **prevent** health problems by practicing healthy living. Simple prevention measures such as removing safety hazards in the home, healthy built environments and small lifestyle changes can empower us to stay healthy and get more from our later years.

Several chronic diseases can be treated if we detect them in time. Many of us are not taking measures, such as early detection and screening, to **protect** our health. Many over 65 are not regularly screened despite the availability of effective screening. In Hawaii, for example, the prevalence of diabetes in those 60 and older has doubled to 17% since 2000. Families and communities play a critical role in ensuring that they protect their own health and that of their aging loved ones. Currently, more than 14 million U.S. workers care for aging family members, and two-thirds of Americans who are under age 60 think they will have elder care responsibilities in the future. In Hawaii, about one-fifth of us provide care for aging family members. These facts make it even more essential that we teach the three Ps to all in Hawaii, young and old.

The good news is we can live longer healthier lives by working with our family members and health care providers to manage our conditions. We can **plan** to manage our health to promote a higher quality of life in later years.

Whether we are an aging person ourselves, an aging person caring for an older person, a community leader or policy maker, following the three Ps will make all of Hawaii stronger. Throughout the first week of April, DOH and HPHA will stage activities to promote the three Ps of living stronger, longer--all aimed at offering participants an opportunity to learn more about the three Ps and start incorporating them into their daily lives.